

The Global Middle East in the Age of Speed

Worcester Room, Hornton Grange, 53 Edgbaston Park Road, B15 2TT

University of Birmingham

Thursday 2nd-Friday 3rd June 2016

Agenda

Thursday 2nd June

09:00-09:30 **Registration** (*tea and coffee will be available*)

09:30-09:45 **Welcome and Introductory Comments:** Simon Jackson (Birmingham)

09:45-12:15 **Panel 1: Colonial Connections and Comparisons**

Chair: Simon Jackson (Birmingham)/ Discussant: Robert G. Fletcher (Warwick)

'Curing The Natives From Their Carelessness: Cars, Race, and Road Safety in Interwar French Colonial Indochina.'

Stéphanie Ponsavady (Wesleyan University)

'Racing in French Algeria and Italian Libya: Taming Contingency In Colonial Heterotopias of Speed.'

Jakob Kraus (Freie Universität, Berlin)

'From Camel to Truck? Automobiles and the Pastoralist Nomadism of Syrian Tribes during the French Mandate (1920-1946).'

Mehdi Sakatni (IREMAM, Aix-Marseille University)

12:15-1:15 **Lunch** (*provided*)

13:15-15:15 **Panel 2: Mobile Lives in the era of National Development**

Chair: Sara Fregonese (Birmingham)/Discussant: Kristin Monroe (University of Kentucky)

'Boars, buses and planes: speed and movement in a Middle Eastern Life.'

Andrew Arsan (University of Cambridge)

'The Love of Order: Governing Mobility in Colonial and Post-Colonial Syria.'

Kevin W. Martin (Indiana University)

15:15-15:30 **Coffee Break**

15:30-17:30 **Panel 3: Assembling Middle Eastern Auto-Mobility: Fords & Fordism**
Chair: Nathan Cardon (Birmingham)/Discussant: Simon Jackson (Birmingham)

**‘Motoring through the East’: Automobiles and Infrastructure in the Interwar
Port Cities of Trieste, Alexandria, and Istanbul.’**

Saima Akhtar (Forum Transregionale Studien – Berlin)

**‘Ford Motor Company Exports Inc, Istanbul 1923-1944: Assembling Cars,
Ports, and Markets through Automotives.’**

Aslı Odman (Urban and Regional Planning, Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University,
Istanbul)

17:30-17:45 **Refreshments**

17:45-19:00 **Keynote Talk: Nile Green (UCLA)**

**‘Roads to Oxiana: Multilingual Travelogues from the Middle East and India’s
Motor Age.’**

19:15 **Dinner (Conference Park)**

Friday 3rd June

09:15 Coffee

09:30-12:00 Panel 1: Automobility from Decolonization to Neoliberalism

Chair: Adam Ramadan (Birmingham)/Discussant: Andrew Arsan (Cambridge)

'Circulation and Biopolitics in 1960s Beirut.'

Kristin Monroe (University of Kentucky)

'Producing the Lebanese State: The Social Poetics of Automobile Space in Beirut.'

Lauren Hales (University of Oxford)

'Jamming: Zahma as a Political Force'

On Barak (Tel Aviv University)

12:00-13:00 Lunch

13:00-15:00 Panel 2: Revolution & Mobility in Cairo

Chair: Pascal Ménoret (Brandeis)/Discussant: Lucie Ryzova (Birmingham)

'Understanding the Underground: Revolution and the socio-economic impact of the Cairo metro.'

Miriam Berger (Oxford)

'Whose street and whose term? Revisiting urban informality in Cairo public space, 2011-2015.'

Omar Nagati (CLUSTER, Cairo)

15:00-15:30 Coffee break

15:30-17:30 Panel 3: Trans-regional Mobilities

Chair: Simon Jackson (Birmingham)/Discussant: Nile Green

'Autorickshaw: the career of a rolling object between India and Egypt (2000 onwards).'

Yann-Philippe Tastevin (CNRS, Toulouse II)

'Learning from Riyadh: Joyriding, Infrastructure, and Politics'

Pascal Ménoret (Brandeis)

17:30-18:00 Refreshments

18:00-19:15 Film Screening: Speed Sisters (Dir. Amber Fares, 2015, 78 mins)

19:30 Dinner (Restaurant)

Abstracts

Saima Akhtar

The Automobile and Fordist Imagery in Early 20th Century Middle East

Automobiles, streetscapes, and infrastructure have reconfigured cities along socio-economic and political lines, and, over the last century, have also been important tools in nation building and transregional alliances. Taking the first third of the twentieth century as a temporal frame, this talk examines the presence of American automotive enterprises in the greater Middle East, with a focus on Fordist ideologies and advertising. In an effort to outbid other Western competitors at the start of the First War, the makers of the Ford tractor and automobile approached the capital cities of Egypt, Turkey, and India as a trifecta that created a geographic gateway into the “markets of the Orient.” Using the medium of film, newsletters, and photography, this talk looks at the development of Fordist commercial strategies in the region and the narratives that were constructed under the banner of American technological prowess. The ads used the automobile to communicate messages of urban modernity and advancement, while effectively carving out new markets and geographies for the use and production of Ford products.

Ash Odman

Ford Motor Company Exports Inc, Istanbul 1923-1944: Assembling Cars, Ports, and Markets through Automotives

On 7th of December, 1928 The Times reported on the projected Ford Motor Company’s Istanbul assembly plant at the Port of Istanbul as if a new regional center of automobile production was on the rise: ‘The assembly plant will, it is said, be the largest in the world, and will supply the needs of the whole of the Near and Middle East as well as Central Europe.’ This investment was realized in a much modest version in 1929 by way of a generous concession of free zone rights by the young Turkish Republic to Ford. It stopped assembling cars in 1933 and was closed in 1944 ending as a big failure story for all stakeholders involved. Telling the erased story of this assembly plant at a tiny section of the Port of Istanbul and drawing the incremental changes in the territory attributed to it between 1922 and 1938 sheds light into the most salient interconnections between the cities, politics and phenomena of the Interwar period of that part of the world.

Thus The Ford plant in Istanbul in the Interwar period not only assembled cars, but also connected ports, competed with other Mediterranean (Trieste, Piraeus), Central-European (Bucharest) , Soviet (Gorkygrad) and Middle Eastern (Alexandria) cities and finally tried to give a national image of its production within the context of the rise of economic nationalism in the 1930’s. Finally this paper aims to question the geographic-ideological concept of Middle East and its relevancy, firstly for the product of automobile and its territory and secondly for the interwar period covered.

Mehdi Sakatni

From Camel to Truck? Automobile and the Pastoralist Nomadism of Syrian Tribes during the French Mandate (1920-1946)

A common saying about nomadic tribes is that the motorization – i.e. the passage from animal to automobile transportation – brought about the transformation and eventually the obliteration of the nomad pastoralist lifestyle in the long twentieth century.

Through the example of nomadic tribes in French mandatory Syria, I aim to show that the automobile actually helped the nomads to strengthen their position and to defend their economical and political interests with more vigour. Automobiles allowed tribal chiefs to experiment enhanced mobility, thus performing a faster connection between the bulk of the tribe and the towns and their market centres. Nomads could ensure to sell their livestock and products with greater fluency. Motor cars also presented nomads with a new form of weaponry with which they could challenge the technical hegemony commonly associated with colonial power. Lastly, it enabled tribal chiefs to gain social prestige and, therefore, to assert themselves as ruling elites in the soon-to-be-born independent state.

I shall focus on two major Syrian tribes – Ruwala and Haddîdîn – to evaluate the influence of motorization on nomadic pastoralism in interwar Syria.

This paper draws mainly on the archives of the French mandate's administration in Syria (Centre des Archives Diplomatiques de Nantes) and on the private papers of French officials.

Jakob Kraus

Taming Contingency in Colonial Heterotopias of Speed

North Africa saw spectacular motor sports events from the 1920s onwards. These included the Citroen-sponsored Sahara crossing in 1922-3 and the Algiers-Gao rally during the 1930 Anniversary of French Algeria. Libya had the Tripoli Grand Prix and a road race on the new coastal highway, inaugurated in 1937. Those were 'geosymbolic' events (Pociello): the Saharan crossings 'drew the map of French Algeria' (Dine) and even linked it to West Africa, at a time when colonial planners were envisaging a trans-Saharan railway. The race on the Libyan Litoranea, for its part, combined the Fascists' emulation of the Romans (and their imperial road network) with their modernist self-image- epitomised by Libyan governor Balbo, a popular aviation hero. In both France and Italy ideas about national regeneration and progress were common and the colonies seemed to be the ideal heterotopias (Foucault) for their implementation: from Le Corbusiers radical urbanism to the politics of 'forced modernisation' (Feichtinger/Malinowski) in Algeria, or with the Futurist-inspired settlements for the 'new man' in Libya. Both colonial powers, I argue, created specific heterotopias of speed not only to symbolise their grip in the territory. By linking colonial myths of discovery and infrastructure with modern tourism, they also served to tame contingency- natural and political- at a time of insecurity: they were supposed to display, in Orientalist fashion, masculine European dynamism vis-à-vis backwards Muslims, as is obvious from the contemporary media coverage. Beyond that, they were showcases for the possibility of a reinvigorated nation. Colonial heterotopias of speed, thus, served as a reassurance for metropolises, still struggling with the traumas of World War I, in a period of increasing political demands

(Algeria) or after two decades of fierce resistance (Libya). Ironically though, the French automotive industry was already based on North African migrant labour- which was becoming the most fertile environment for Algerian nationalism.

Stéphanie Ponsavady

Curing The Natives From Their Carelessness: Cars, Race, and Road Safety in Interwar French Colonial Indochina

This talk focuses on the co-construction of road users' identities, such as native pedestrians, native chauffeurs, European passengers, and European drivers, during the interwar period in French Colonial Indochina. I look at debates taking place within the French-led Automobile Clubs, court proceedings, and colonial administrators' correspondence to identify some of the processes through which race came to affect one's claim to automobility. The introduction of motorized transportation led French authorities and motorists to focus their attention on the issue of natives' mobility. The figures of the unruly indigenous pedestrian and the distrustful native chauffeur expressed a discursive and experiential crisis that questioned colonialism itself. Ultimately, I argue that the emergence of road safety as a modern public concern was intimately related to race.

Andrew Arsan

Boats, buses, and planes: speed and movement in a Middle Eastern life

What possibilities does microhistory offer to transregional historians? This question has been posed with increasing frequency in recent years by scholars of trans-local processes eager to come down from the Olympian heights from which previous generations of world historians examined the workings of society. I propose here to sketch out one answer to this question by examining the shifting workings of late imperialism through the life and movements of a single person, the British woman Helen Garnett, who lived in the Middle East from the early 1930s until the late 1980s. Cutting across the transition from Mandate rule to independent statehood and from steam to air travel, her life was given shape by these shifts, but also by the conflicts the region underwent over the short twentieth century.

In my paper, I will focus on the first moving moments of this Middle Eastern life, and Garnett's time as an employee of the Nairn Company. Established by two New Zealand-born brothers, Norman and Gerald Nairn, Nairn acquired early on in the Mandate years the rights to assure passenger transport between Beirut, Damascus, and Baghdad. Priding itself on the speed, comfort and modernity of its vehicles, it connected up the capitals of the Mandate states, transforming these disparate spaces into a single sphere of automobile transport. Garnett's recollections provide insight into the imaginaries this mode of movement allowed – a way of seeing the world that luxuriated in the slowness and stillness of the desert, but that also sought to transect it, traversing it as rapidly as possible to connect up the sites of imperial power and pleasure. Garnett's departure from Nairn and marriage to an executive of Middle East Airlines, meanwhile, marks another shift in the region's history, as it became a node in the networks of air travel that came to supplant the

steam routes of old, and as Anglo-French imperium gave way to American hegemony. In this one life, then, are mapped out the changing modes, and meanings, of speed in the Middle Eastern twentieth century.

Kevin Martin

Freedom Must be Regulated: Forms of Mobility and the Post-Colonial Syrian State

Auto-mobility came to the Arab East at the turn of the twentieth century with the construction of the Hejaz Railway and other elements of the Ottoman Railway system. After the dissolution of the empire, the focus shifted to automobile transport, with the appearance of the Nairn Brothers Transport Company and their competitors, who sought to “conquer” the Syrian Desert by providing express mail and passenger service linking Beirut, Damascus, and Baghdad, thereby producing a new spatial imaginary. By the time the former Arab Lands of the Ottoman Empire achieved independence after the Second World War, passenger air service was widely available, and American conceptions of the automobile as symbol and instrument of individual freedom had permeated popular culture. This paper seeks to recover these transformative experiences by analyzing the advertising and sale of automobiles, as well as the cinematic depiction of “car culture” and other forms of mobility in post-WWII Syria, linking these phenomena to public discourses about urban planning, public transportation, safety, order, and hygiene, in the context of urbanization and “national” development.

Kristin Monroe

Circulation and Biopolitics in 1960s Beirut

In this paper, I bring a new perspective to an emerging global historiography of automobility by exploring, in a provisional way and as a basis for further research, the role of circulation in the making and governing of Beirut’s urban space and society in the early 1960s. This is an underexplored era of Lebanese history, one generally glossed as Lebanon’s ‘golden age’; a time when Beirut emerged as both a hedonistic playground of the Middle East and thriving center of Arab art and culture before a protracted civil and regional conflict (1975-1990) befell the nation. Drawing mainly from Lebanese newspapers from the period, I examine the kinds of relations of power, knowledge, and space that were brought to bear on circulation in the city. I conceive of the management of circulation as part of the larger project to shape and govern public space in an era of rapid urbanization and turbulent regional geopolitics. This is a regulatory and infrastructural project, seen, for example, in the installation of the city’s first traffic lights, as well as one constituted through particular social technologies, such as the cultivation of bourgeois ethics of driving conduct. In the newspapers of the time, I propose, we find not just a story about the actions of government to control circulation, but an emergent biopolitics of mobility that is about making people govern themselves.

Lauren Hales

Beirut's Chaotic Automobility, Imagined Spaces and State Crisis

This paper focuses on discourses emerging from local commentaries on Beirut's spaces and practices of automobility, with particular attention to descriptions of 'chaos'. Examining the regime of significations that make this 'chaos' possible reveals also a dominant narrative of Lebanon's state 'absence'. Deconstructing the array of assumptions behind local narratives of mobility illustrates the way Western taxonomies are imbricated in Lebanon's postwar spatial reconstruction, which ultimately produce a particular notion of statehood. Deconstructing the binaries inherent to such narratives reveals how the absent state narrative is predicated on a previous spatialisation of it defined by modern Western ontologies. Local narratives and 'spaces of representation' articulate notions of chaos, order and 'statehood' that have very material consequences in constructing both a 'desired' state, as well as its apparent vacancy. Local representations of Beirut's 'chaotic' mobility and state absence also permit the framing of a 'crisis' narrative. Political stalemates, the absence of a President, and a general notion of contingency are used to explain the situation on the roads. However, framing Beirut's mobility within a 'crisis' narrative is also productive of a 'blind spot' that obscures its banality as well as the regime's continuing reproduction of this crisis. Together, narratives of Lebanon's 'absent state' and 'crisis' of mobility obscure state-elite agency in their structuring of Beirut's chaos in the first place, as well as their neoliberal-sectarian logics of political domination and reproduction.

On Barak

Jamming: *Zahma* as a Political Force

Sadat's "Open Door" policy involved the forceful promotion of an American-inspired car society in Egypt's urban centers, including building new highways and bridges, forging new alliances with the region's oil monarchies and international organizations such as the International Monetary Fund, and dismantling the country's public transportation. While urban congestion and chaos offered ample cause for complaint in previous decades, the 1970s and 1980s thus saw the emergence of an escalating traffic gridlock, and a more general experience of urban congestion or *zabma* which were distinctive in intensity, but also in kind, proving indexical of the powers that created them. *Zabma* was surprisingly productive, promoting new kinds of counterhegemonic agendas, from popular musical styles, through novel modes of Islamist preaching, to new avenues for sexual harassment. Yet as this presentation will demonstrate, with time *zabma* was harnessed and perhaps even intentionally cultivated by Egypt's regime in order to confront and curtail popular political critique and organization.

Miriam Berger

Understanding the Underground: Revolution and the socio-economic impact of the Cairo metro

My paper assesses the political and socio-economic impact of the Cairo metro within the backdrop of Egypt's neo-liberal order and the rise and defeat of Egypt's 2011 revolution. The Cairo metro — internationally financed, locally mismanaged, and socio-politically vital to Cairo's functioning — has been largely overlooked as an important sphere for understanding how power on the everyday level in Egypt operates. Situated within academic literature on the anthropology of cities and mobilities, my research is based on over 40 interviews with metro riders, funders, and stakeholders conducted in 2015 and 2016, as well as my own experiences riding the metro since 2012.

I argue that the metro — its funding, operation, rules, and routes — has deeply impacted life in Cairo by enabling and shaping how everyday people interact with one another and the state, and in the process resist and reinforce dominant political, social, and economic orders. This spontaneously ordered world tells us a great deal about the networks of local and international interests shaping the Egypt that the *sha'ab* [people] experience, contest, and reflect daily. The metro is undeniably a public good that makes moving around Cairo possible. It's also an important test case of how far neoliberal reforms in Egypt can actually go. In this way, metro space has great potential to make cross-class or cross-religion appeals — thereby raising the political stakes and state's determination to not let it be used for anything other than basic transit. Through several case studies, I explore how the state and people have contested metro space — and to what consequence — within the backdrop

Omar Nagati

Whose street and whose terms? Revisiting urban informality in Cairo public space, 2011-2015

Mobility and movement are predicated on enforcing specific “urban orders” in public space, whether state regulated or locally organized. This paper addresses the issue of contestation and negotiation over public space in Cairo during a condition of political and urban flux following the 2011 upheaval as the state became increasingly vulnerable and security was relatively absent during this moment of transition. As formal order was temporarily suspended, streets became awash in a sea of informality, engendering alternative, and rather conflicting orders.

By analyzing urban actors and their spatial practices, it aims at examining the ruling principles and underlying structures governing the seemingly chaotic urban informality on the street level. Using photo documentation, time-lapse photography, visual mapping and interviews, the paper attempts to unravel some of the competing interests and frames of reference of the multiple stakeholders, looking at street vendors, informal roadside development, and downtown passages as an entry point to the larger question of contestation and negotiation over public space.

Yann-Phillipe Tastevin

Autorickshaw: the Career of a Rolling Object between India and Egypt

In this paper, through a multi-sited ethnography, I seek to “grasp” the two extremities of a transnational chain that has shaped Egypt's enthusiasm for the autorickshaw. Starting with the founding and stabilisation of this industry in India, the paper moves to the implementation and success of the the Indian three-wheeler in Egypt and notably in the small towns of the Nile Delta, in order to understand the varied and dispersed techniques of manufacture and distribution characteristic of a globalised world. Local study of autorickshaw mobility practice in the Nile Delta allows for an exploration of the unpredictable dynamics of a circulating technology that is itself regularly re-invented and re-tooled during its journeys.

Pascal Ménoret

Learning from Riyadh: Joyriding, Infrastructure, and Politics

Saudi Arabia became a main contributor to global suburbanization after 1945. First, the United States enrolled the massive Saudi oil reserves in the task of keeping global energy prices low. Low prices in turn fostered economic growth in Western Europe, Japan, and North America, supported the automobile industry, and stimulated car transportation worldwide. Second, the country was an early non-western testing ground for urban growth techniques that, perfected in the United States before WWII, were widely exported during the Cold War: state guaranteed mortgages, standardized building and subdivision, and extensive freeway systems. Cheap gas, safe loans, and real estate speculation metamorphosed the Saudi landscape from the 1970s onward. Middle class Saudis started fleeing the inner cities, choked with car traffic and invaded by rural and foreign migrants, to the peace and isolation of the suburbs. This paper examines the consequences of this transformation, in particular through the experience of joyriders and car drifters. I will compare joyriding in Riyadh with joyriding in other locales, in particular Belfast, in order to interrogate the relationship between youth crime, infrastructure, and politics in conflict-ridden societies.

Participants' Biographies

Saima Akhtar is an Associate Fellow at ICI Berlin and her research focuses on the relationship between the built environment, corporate enterprise and labour migrations.

She holds a bachelor's degree from The University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, a master's degree in the History, Theory and Criticism of Architecture from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and a PhD in urban studies from the University of California.

Andrew Arsan is University Lecturer in Modern Middle Eastern History at Cambridge and author of *Interlopers of Empire: The Lebanese Diaspora in Colonial French West Africa* (London and New York: Hurst and Oxford University Press, 2014). "I am currently at work on two book-length projects. The first is a work on contemporary Lebanon, focusing on the politics of everyday life and the issues that preoccupy ordinary Lebanese on a day-to-day basis, from electricity, water, rubbish and roads to public space and nightlife. The second is a synoptic history of the lands we now call Lebanon from the early sixteenth century to the early twenty-first century."

On Barak is a historian of the modern Middle East, specializing in the introduction of science and technology into non-Western settings. He is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Middle Eastern and African History at Tel Aviv University. He was a Cotsen Postdoctoral at the Princeton Society of Fellows and his recent book was titled 'On Time: Technology and Temporality in Modern Egypt'.

Miriam Berger is a journalist who focuses on the Middle East and Africa. Her work has taken her to many countries including Egypt, Ethiopia, Greece and Jordan. She is studying for an MA in Modern Middle Eastern Studies at St. Anthony's College, University of Oxford. Prior to her masters, she was a Fulbright and Centre for Arabic Study Abroad (CASA) Fellow in Egypt from 2012-13.

Nathan Cardon is a Lecturer (Assistant Professor) in US History in the Department of History and the American and Canadian Studies Centre at the University of Birmingham. "I am currently beginning work on two new projects. The first examines how African American men and women challenged the United States' social and gender hierarchy at the turn-of-the-century. Using cycling as a lens it examines the intersections of race, empire, sport, and leisure in the formulation of American modernity. The second and much broader project examines the cultural history of doping in sport beginning in the 1890s and ending with Lance Armstrong."

Robert G. Fletcher is Associate Professor of Britain and Empire at the University of Warwick. His research combines the histories of imperialism, nomadic societies and desert environments in the 19th, 20th and 21st centuries. His first book, *British Imperialism and 'The Tribal Question'*:

Desert Administration and Nomadic Societies in the Middle East, was published by Oxford University Press in 2015. His teaching interests include Middle Eastern history, Anglo-Japanese relations and histories of migrations and mobility.

Sara Fregonese is a Birmingham Fellow in the School of Geography, Earth and Environmental Studies and associate of the Institute for Conflict, Cooperation and Security at the University of Birmingham. Her research concerns the mutual constitution between conflict, geopolitics and the urban built environment with a special focus on Lebanon and Beirut, where she has fifteen years of research and publication experience.

Nile Green is Associate Professor at the Program of Central Asia in the Department of History at UCLA. With a strong interest in Islam in the Middle East, Africa and Europe, Nile also works as a historian of Muslim societies more generally. Nile also serves as chair of the UCLA Central Asia Initiative and on the editorial board of the International Journal of Middle East Studies. His books include *The Love of Strangers: What Six Muslim Students Learned in Jane Austen's London* (Princeton UP: 2016).

Lauren Hales holds an MPhil in Modern Middle Eastern Studies with Arabic from the University of Oxford. Her thesis title was 'Producing the Lebanese State: The Social Poetics of Automobile Space in Beirut'. She was the recipient of the British Institute – Qasid Institute scholarship, awarded by the Council for British Research in the Levant, September- December 2016.

Simon Jackson is Lecturer in Modern Middle Eastern History at the University of Birmingham, where in 2014-17 he also holds a Leverhulme Early Career Fellowship. He works on the discourse and politics of economic development in the French League of Nations Mandate in Syria and Lebanon, on the history of Fordism in the post-Ottoman Middle East, and is starting a new project on the global history of colonial commodities and natural resources, specifically North African phosphates in the intersecting contexts of decolonization and the Green Revolution.

Jakob Kraus graduated from Berlin Graduate School of Muslim Cultures and Societies at Freie University, Berlin in 2014. The title of his dissertation was 'Libyan historiography in the Italian colonial period'. His past publications include 'The end of an artificial construct', which explores the historical roots of the current Middle East.

Kevin Martin is Assistant Professor in the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Cultures and Adjunct Assistant Professor in the Department of History at Indiana University. He holds a MA in Arab Studies and a PhD in the History of the Middle East and North Africa from Georgetown University. His publications include: [*Syria's Democratic Years: Citizens, Experts, and*](#)

[Media in the 1950s \(Public Cultures of the Middle East and North Africa\)](#). Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2015.

Pascal Ménoret is Renee and Lester Crown Chair in Modern Middle East Studies at Brandeis. He completed his Ph.D. in 2008 from the Department of History at the Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne. His research combines urban history and social anthropology. His latest book, *Joyriding in Riyadh: Oil, Urbanism, and Road Revolt*, (Cambridge University Press, 2014) explores the relationship between urban planning and youth unrest in the Saudi capital.

Kristin Monroe is assistant professor of anthropology at the University of Kentucky. Her research concerns urban space and mobility, social inequality, and state making in the Middle East. Her forthcoming book, *The Insecure City: Space, Power, and Mobility in Beirut* will be published by Rutgers University Press in spring 2016 and her other work has appeared in *City & Society* (2011), *Anthropology of Work Review* (2014), *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* (2014) and *Everyday Life in the Muslim Middle East*, Third Edition (2014).

Omar Nagati is an architect and a graduate of Cairo University. He studied and taught at the University of British Columbia and University of California Berkeley, focusing on informal urbanism. He recently co-founded CLUSTER, a new platform for urban research and design initiatives in downtown Cairo.

Asli Odman is an Instructor in the Urban and Regional Planning department at Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University. The main area of her work is the concretization of labour practices and capital accumulation processes in urban spaces. She holds degrees in political science and economics, as well as a master's degree in social sciences and a PhD in Modern History from the Istanbul Boğaziçi University.

Stéphanie Ponsavady is Assistant Professor of French at Wesleyan University. She holds masters from the University of Provence and New York University (NYU), as well as an MPHIL and PhD from NYU. Her dissertation title was: "Moteurs de Mecontentement et de Desire: Automobiles et routes en Indochine coloniale (1897-1939)."

Adam Ramadan is a Lecturer in Human Geography in the School of Geography, Earth and Environmental Sciences. His work lies at the intersection between political and cultural geography. It addresses the 'everyday' of geopolitics, how ordinary people understand and negotiate their position within broader geopolitical dynamics. Much of this work has focused on the Middle East, and in particular on refugee issues.

Lucie Ryzova is social and cultural historian of modern Egypt at the University of Birmingham, with particular interest in Egyptian popular culture and vernacular modernity. Her first book, *The Age of the Efendiyya: Passages to Modernity in National-Colonial Egypt* (Oxford University Press, 2014) is both a social history of a specific generation of young, self-consciously modern men (the *efendis*), and a cultural history of Egyptian modernity writ large.

Mehdi Sakatni is Assistant Lecturer at Aix-Marseille University and is undertaking a PhD. The title of his thesis is 'The politics of nomadic sedentarization and economic development: Syria under French mandate.' The aim of this research is to explore and determine one of the most significant projects of the mandate period in Syria: the settlement of nomadic tribes.

His research areas consist of the history of the French mandate in the Levant, rural history, land ownership and land registry and economic history.

Yann-Phillipe Tastevin is a researcher in anthropology at the French National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS). His current research topics include Globalisation in the Mediterranean and East Africa and globalised technologies. He is also Associate curator of the exhibition "Garbage!" which will explore the economics of waste and recycling in the Mediterranean, scheduled for 2017.